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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

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TAGS: PREL KWBG PTER IS KPAL
SUBJECT: HANIYAH EXITS RAFAH BY CAR; GAZA INFIGHTING
DECLINES

REF: JERUSALEM 5027

CLASSIFIED BY: CONSUL GENERAL JAKE WALLES, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. PA PRIME MINISTER ISMAYIL HANIYAH EXITED RAFAH BY VEHICLE DECEMBER 28, VIOLATING PROTOCOLS REQUIRING ALL PERSONS TO CROSS THE BORDER ON FOOT EXCEPT VIPS WITH PRIOR COORDINATION, ACCORDING TO EU-BAM. 300 PALESTINIANS WHO CROSSED THE BORDER FROM EGYPT NEAR THE 1630 CLOSING TIME WERE PROCESSED AFTERHOURS WITHOUT EU-BAM PRESENT. RAFAH TERMINAL IS OPEN DECEMBER 29. WHILE FATAH-HAMAS TENSIONS REMAIN HIGH, INTERFACTIONAL VIOLENCE HAS TAPERED OFF IN GAZA AFTER DECEMBER 24 HAMAS-FATAH AGREEMENTS TO END INTERFACTION INCITEMENT AND FIGHTING. SOME CLASHES CONTINUED IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK.

HANIYAH EXITS GAZA AT RAFAH,
BUT REFUSES TO LEAVE VEHICLE

¶12. (C) PM ISMAYIL HANIYAH, ACCCOMPANIED BY FOREIGN MINISTER MAHMUD AL-ZAHAR, INTERIOR MINISTER SA'ID SIYAM AND ACTING PLC SPEAKER AHMAD BAHAR, EXITED GAZA BY CAR VIA RAFAH CROSSING DECEMBER 28 AT 1215 LOCAL, ACCORDING TO EU-BAM OPERATIONS CHIEF PATRICK DELVAL. DELVAL SAID THAT HANIYAH'S ENTOURAGE ENTERED THE RAFAH TERMINAL IN TWO VEHICLES, AND THAT ONLY TWO OF THE OCCUPANTS EXITED THE VEHICLES TO PRESENT PASSPORTS. HANIYAH AND THE MINISTERS REFUSED TO EXIT THE VEHICLES, HE SAID, AND DID NOT GIVE PRIOR NOTICE THAT THEY WOULD CROSS BY VEHICLE OR THE NAMES OF THOSE CROSSING.

¶13. (C) THE RAFAH PROTOCOL DOES NOT ALLOW VEHICLES TO PASS THROUGH THE TERMINAL EXCEPT UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES FOR SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WITH PRIOR NOTICE, ACCORDING TO DELVAL. WHEN NOTIFIED THAT HANIYAH HAD ENTERED RAFAH TERMINAL, THE ISRAELI LIAISON AT KAREM SHALOM TOLD EU-BAM THAT HANIYAH MUST CROSS BY FOOT, DELVAL SAID. THE LIAISON SAID THAT: A) AS SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE HAMAS-LED PA THAT DOES NOT RECOGNIZE ISRAEL, THEY DO NOT QUALIFY FOR SPECIAL COURTESIES EXTENDED TO & SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS8 UNDER THE RAFAH PROTOCOL; B) HANIYAH GAVE NO PRIOR NOTIFICATION AS REQUIRED BY THE PROTOCOL; THEREFORE C) HANIYAH SHOULD PASS THROUGH THE TERMINAL ON FOOT, LIKE ALL TRAVELERS, AND THEN TO A VIP BUS THAT WOULD TAKE HIM TO THE EGYPTIAN SIDE.

¶14. (C) DESPITE ISRAELI OBJECTIONS COMMUNICATED TO EU-BAM, DELVAL SAID THAT HANIYAH CROSSED THROUGH THE TERMINAL BY VEHICLE TO THE EGYPTIAN SIDE, AT WHICH TIME HIS PARTY EXITED THE TWO VEHICLES. THE VEHICLES DRIVERS THEN DROVE BACK THROUGH THE TERMINAL INTO GAZA.

HANIYAH ON HAJJ, MIDEAST TOUR

15. (SBU) HANIYAH IS IN MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA, TO COMPLETE THE HAJJ, AND WILL THEN VISIT QATAR, KUWAIT AND JORDAN, ACCORDING TO PALESTINIAN NEWSPAPERS. AFTER LEAVING GAZA, HANIYAH AND HIS PARTY TOOK A PRIVATE PLANE, PROVIDED BY SAUDI KING ABDALLAH, FROM AL-ARISH AIRPORT TO SAUDI ARABIA, ACCORDING TO A STATEMENT BY HANIYAH'S GAZA OFFICE.

CROSSING BRIEFLY SHUT,
DUE TO POWER OUTAGE

16. (C) SHORTLY AFTER HANIYAH LEFT, EU-BAM SHUT THE CROSSING FOR AN HOUR DUE TO LOSS OF VIDEO FEED TO KAREM SHALOM CAUSED BY A POWER OUTAGE, DELVAL SAID, BUT THEN REOPENED THE TERMINAL UNTIL 1630 LOCAL.

300 PALESTINIANS CROSS AFTER
CLOSING; RAFAH OPEN DEC. 29

17. (C) DELVAL SAID THAT NEAR RAFAH'S SCHEDULED CLOSE (1630 LOCAL) ON DECEMBER 28, EGYPTIAN BORDER GUARDS ALLOWED THREE BUSES CARRYING ABOUT 300 PEOPLE INTO THE CORRIDOR BETWEEN THE EGYPTIAN AND PALESTINIAN GATES. THE EGYPTIANS THEN DEPLOYED RIOT POLICE AT THEIR GATE. AS EU-BAM MONITORS PREPARED TO DEPART, DELVAL SAID, THE PALESTINIAN CROSSING OFFICIALS TOLD THE MONITORS THAT THE EGYPTIANS HAD AGREED TO TAKE BACK THE BUSES AND PROCESS THE TRAVELERS THE FOLLOWING DAY. AFTER THE MONITORS DEPARTED, HOWEVER, THE EGYPTIANS DID NOT OPEN THEIR GATE, AND THE PASSENGERS DISEMBARKED FROM THE BUSES AND HEADED TOWARD THE PALESTINIAN TERMINAL, HE SAID. DELVAL SAID THAT PALESTINIAN OFFICIALS DETERMINED THAT THEY HAD NO VIABLE CHOICE OTHER THAN TO PROCESS THE 300 TRAVELERS, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE AWARE THAT IN DOING SO THEY WERE VIOLATING THE RAFAH PROTOCOL. DELVAL OPINED THAT UNTIL RAFAH OPERATES

UNDER A NORMAL, PREDICTABLE SCHEDULE, INCIDENTS SUCH AS THIS WILL PERSIST, AS THE PALESTINIAN TRAVELERS HAD NO CONFIDENCE THAT THE BORDER CROSSING WOULD BE OPEN DECEMBER 29.

18. (C) RAFAH CROSSING IS OPEN DECEMBER 29, AND BY 1330 LOCAL HAD PROCESSED OVER 1,300 PEOPLE, DELVAL SAID. A TOTAL OF 2,100 PEOPLE PASSED THROUGH RAFAH ON DECEMBER 28 (IN BOTH DIRECTIONS).

FACTIONAL VIOLENCE DOWN IN GAZA

19. (SBU) FOLLOWING HAMAS-FATAH AGREEMENTS DECEMBER 24 TO END INTERFACTIONAL INCITEMENT AND VIOLENCE, NO PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN KILLED IN GAZA, THOUGH TENSIONS REMAIN HIGH. THE LAST SERIOUS HAMAS-FATAH INCIDENTS OCCURRED DECEMBER 23, WHEN GUNMEN (ALLEGEDLY HAMAS) FIRED AT PREVENTIVE SECURITY ORGANIZATION (PSO) MAJ. HASAN JARBU', INJURING HIM AND A BODYGUARD, AND DECEMBER 24, WHEN UNKNOWN GUNMEN FIRED SHOTS AT THE RESIDENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTER MAHMUD AL-ZAHAR (HAMAS), WITHOUT CAUSING ANY INJURIES. HAMAS-FATAH FIGHTING HAS CONTINUED IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK, WHERE GUNMEN SHOT AND SERIOUSLY INJURED A HAMAS ACTIVIST IN JENIN DECEMBER 27, AND, SEPARATELY, ATTEMPTED TO KIDNAP A HAMAS ACTIVIST IN NABLUS DECEMBER 25.

WALLES